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Friday, Jan. 26, 2018



## **TODAY'S COLUMN**

### **STEW MILLER & BRIAN O'HARA: Solar already making America great, tariffs threaten it**

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Stew Miller is the co-founder and president of Cary-based Yes Solar Solutions. Brian O'Hara is senior vice president at North Carolina-based Strata Solar.*

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Homegrown energy, boundless local economic advancement opportunities, and jobs for communities that need them most. What's not to like about solar energy?

It seems our current federal administration is determined to find something. President Donald Trump's recent move to impose a 30 percent tariff on solar panels looks a lot like a solution looking for a problem.

Here in North Carolina, [a state ranked #2 in the nation](#) for installed solar capacity, this news is confusing and frustrating at once.

Even those who do not identify as a solar consumer or advocate have experienced the residual benefits of our state's growing, [\\$10 billion clean energy economy](#), largely propelled by solar in the past decade. Those benefits include new property tax revenues, jobs, local economic expansion, and lower long-term electric rates.

Yet, we can't seem to shake the target off our back. This new tariff is primed for a direct hit on North Carolina-based solar businesses like ours, with a bullseye.

on our many customers and employees.

In a state and nation still predominantly powered by aging, traditional energy resources that are much costlier – and unquestionably less healthy – for our citizens, why would our highest-ranking lawmaker seek to cripple a proven way forward? There is simply no logical answer; it can only be misguided, extreme ideological opposition.

After all, clean energy is no longer a niche industry embraced by groups on the liberal end of the political spectrum. North Carolina is living, working proof of its bipartisan appeal. In fact, the growing success of North Carolina's clean energy economy in the past decade can be directly attributed to Republicans and Democrats working together to pass smart policies that enabled its growth, while delivering more choices for customers via market competition.

In considering the severe impacts a 30 percent solar tariff might have on our local economies, we have to wonder: Did President Trump consider any of the very public and thoughtful anti-tariff stances expressed by many of his conservative colleagues in D.C. – including both of North Carolina's U.S. Senators Thom Tillis and Richard Burr; conservative-backed American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and its current president, N.C. Rep. Jason Saine (R-Lincoln), and The Heritage Foundation; and countless other business groups with interests otherwise complementary to President Trump's "America First" agenda? Evidently, even the loudest voices on President Trump's party line can fall on deaf ears.

In its coverage of the tariff decision, The Wall Street Journal asks, "Can Donald Trump stand prosperity?" We have to ask that question ourselves, as this decision immediately jeopardizes current and future economic opportunities resulting from solar energy.

According to the NC Sustainable Energy Association, solar supports over 5,000 full-time jobs in North Carolina. The Solar Energy Industry Association estimates 23,000 Americans will lose their jobs as a result of this new tariff. That's a tough pill to swallow in any instance; making the pill that much more bitter is the fact this unnecessary tariff will primarily benefit two companies which operate outside of the U.S. Isn't it ironic?

The President has somehow concluded that benefiting German- and Chinese-owned solar companies will make America great again.

Beyond the head-scratching and lingering questions that remain about this puzzling and disappointing policy move, one thing remains certain: Our solar industry is resilient.

Here in North Carolina, our strong bipartisan approach to energy policy-making will keep working relentlessly against regressive policies like this tariff to continue moving our clean energy future forward. We'd like to thank the many current decision-makers: Gov. Roy Cooper; U.S. Sens. Burr and Tillis; and state Reps. Saine and John Szoka, to name a few, for their leadership and support for clean energy.

This tariff is not the first time we've been hit, and it likely won't be the last – but job-creating, cost-saving, renewable and clean solar energy isn't going

anywhere.

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Yes Solar Solutions is a nationally accredited solar design and installation company serving businesses and homeowners throughout the Carolinas. Stew Miller serves on the Board at Conservatives for Clean Energy. Strata Solar is a national leader in utility-scale solar that actively develops in over 20 states and operates over 160 solar farms in North Carolina. Brian O'Hara serves as chairman of the North Carolina Clean Energy Business Alliance.

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**Saturday, Jan. 21, 2017** -- A roundup of opinion, commentary and analysis. **Courts Cooper wins, gas pipeline gets an OK, N.C. schools chief says \$35 grand is 'good money,' tariffs darken solar industry and more.**

#### **POLICY & POLITICS**

[\*\*MATTHEW BURNS: Supreme Court sides with Cooper in fight over NC elections board\*\*](#) (WRAL-TV analysis) -- The state Supreme Court ruled 4-3 that the General Assembly overstepped its authority last year when it overhauled the state elections board.

[\*\*EMERY DALESIO: Court rules lawmakers illegally grabbed NC governor's powers on elections\*\*](#) (AP news analysis) -- North Carolina's highest court

Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper's ability to pursue his goals, declaring 4-3 unconstitutional a law devising a state elections board that hinted at deadlock.

[\*\*GARY ROBERTSON: Judges refuse to delay North Carolina legislative districts\*\*](#) (AP news analysis) -- A three-judge panel refused North Carolina Republican lawmakers' request to block the use of new legislative district maps the judges approved for this year's elections.

[\*\*BOB PHILLIPS: This could be the year of reckoning for gerrymandering\*\*](#) (Winston-Salem Journal column) — For almost as long as our nation has existed, gerrymandering has plagued our democracy.

[\*\*TRAVIS FAIN: DOJ ignores request in Farr's nomination to federal bench\*\*](#) (WRAL-TV analysis) -- Documents could shed light on accusation that nominee to the U.S. District Court perjured himself.

[\*\*Tolls group locks out that pesky public\*\*](#) (Charlotte Observer) -- An I-77 tolls committee ignores open meetings law while SC Gov. Henry McMaster calls for more transparency in his state.

[\*\*GARY ROBERTSON: Likely gubernatorial candidate Forest touts fundraising\*\*](#) (AP news analysis) -- The latest fundraising numbers released by likely 2020 North Carolina gubernatorial candidate Dan Forest could make fellow Republicans think twice before getting into the race with him.

[\*\*RICK SMITH: Wall Street Journal analysis belittles Triangle's chances to land Amazon HQ2\*\*](#) (WRAL-TV/TechWire column) The Triangle is not being given much of a chance to win the bidding for Amazon's \$5 billion HQ2 project. In an evaluation based on data across six categories, from "culture fit" to cost of living and technology workforce, The Wall Street Journal ranks Raleigh in the third of five tiers for 19 of the 20 finalists recently announced by Amazon. (Toronto is not included.) Dallas ranks as No. 1.

[\*\*Behind the Wheel: N.C. may still be the 'good roads' state\*\*](#) (Fayetteville Observer/WalletHub column) -- Some public officials used to call North Carolina the "good roads" state because of its history in building and maintaining roads, an effort that carries back to an association formed for that purpose in 1902. Apparently, we Tar Heels have retained a little bit of that old glory.

[\*\*WILLIAM BARBER & JONATHAN WILSON-HARTGROVE: The unveiling of Christian Nationalism\*\*](#) (Durham Herald-Sun column) -- As black and white preachers in America, we see our oldest Christian church's refusal of fellowship to Vice President Mike Pence as a prophetic witness to the spiritual crisis we now face.

[\*\*GAVIN OFF & AMES ALEXANDER: Stab-resistant shirts, body alarms. Prisons gear up to defend against inmate attacks\*\*](#) (Charlotte Observer analysis) -- NC prison leaders announced changes to make prisons safer, saying they will spend millions on protective equipment and devices to detect smuggled cellphones.

## **EDUCATION**

[\*\*KELLY HINCHCLIFE: NC superintendent defends '\\$35,000 is good money'\*\*](#)

Superintendent Mark Johnson defended comments he made about teacher pay after local school board members and others criticized his remarks during a conference.

[T. KEUNG HUI: NC's top education leader says \\$35,000 is 'good money' for some new teachers](#) (Durham Herald-Sun analysis) -- NC Schools

Superintendent Mark Johnson's comments that \$35,000 is "good money" for many young teachers is not sitting well with school board members.

[LAURA LESLIE: Lawmakers nearing agreement on class size fix](#) (WRAL-TV analysis) -- Lawmakers are in serious negotiations to work out a deal on a class size mandate that school districts say they cannot afford to carry out.

[UNC Wilmington chancellor to undergo heart bypass surgery](#) (AP news analysis) -- The chancellor at a school in the UNC system school says he will be undergoing heart bypass surgery.

[LISA PHILIP: Chair Of UNC's Board Of Governors Defends Op-Ed](#) (WUNC-FM analysis) -- Tensions on the UNC Board of Governors remain high, a month after the board's chairman wrote an op-ed calling for the board to be united. In the December op-ed, Chairman Louis Bissette called on the board to unite while allowing UNC system leaders to 'do their job.'

[Renaming school for Frederick Douglass honors our history](#) (Wilson Times) -- Frederick Douglass High School occupies a prominent place in Wilson County history. Passing the Douglass name along to the elementary school that replaced it will preserve that history.

[VALERIE STRAUSS: Teachers: How student 'dreamers' enrich our N.C. high school](#) (Washington Post column) -- "Eliminating DACA would mark a symbolic shift in policy but create real consequences in schools across the country and compromise the promises of equity, opportunity and diversity that define our public schools."

## **ENVIRONMENT**

[MATTHEW BURNS: NC regulators grant key permit for natural gas pipeline](#) (WRAL-TV analysis) -- State regulators on Friday gave the go-ahead for a \$5 billion natural gas pipeline to be built in eight North Carolina counties.

[EMERY DALESIO: NC approves gas pipeline permit; allots \\$58M for fixes](#) (AP news analysis) -- A pipeline that would carry fracked natural gas from West Virginia into the Southeast cleared another regulatory hurdle Friday when North Carolina's environmental agency issued a water quality certification.

[Dominion's Atlantic Coast natgas pipe gets N.C. water permit](#) (Reuters news analysis) -- North Carolina environmental regulators issued a water permit on Friday for Dominion Energy Inc's \$5 billion Atlantic Coast natural gas pipeline from West Virginia to North Carolina.

[WILL MICHAELS: NC Regulators Approve Major Permit For Atlantic Coast Pipeline](#) (WUNC-FM analysis) -- The state Department of Environmental Quality has issued a major permit two energy companies need to build the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

analysis) -- A \$5 billion natural gas pipeline expected to run through three counties in the Cape Fear region won approval of a major permit from a state agency. The state Department of Environmental Quality granted Atlantic Coast Pipeline LLC water quality certification, which is required for projects that impact wetlands, buffers or waterways.

[Tariffs will harm solar installations](#) (Greensboro News & Record) -- It took just two days for South Korea's LG Electronics to announce price hikes for most of the washing machines it exports to the United States.

[Solar panel tariffs a step backward](#) (Wilmington Star-News) -- President Trump's decision to slap a massive tariff on solar panel parts will not doom the solar power industry in the United States, but it's a bad idea. Consumers will pay more and some workers will lose their jobs. The overall trend toward solar, however, will not likely be stalled in the long run. The administration approved tariffs as high as 30 percent on panel imports, gradually shrinking to 15 percent over the next four years.

[TAFT WIREBACK: Analysts say Duke's tax windfall should cut rate hike](#) (Greensboro News & Record) -- Utility analysts say that Uncle Sam's new tax law means Duke Energy Carolinas will reap between \$171 million and \$210.5 million in added revenue each year and that should result in a smaller rate increase for its customers.

[JOHN DOWNEY: Rate hike opponents attack Duke Energy's proposed \\$13B grid-improvement plan](#) (Charlotte Business Journal column) -- Critics say the "grid modernization" program included in Duke Energy Carolinas' proposed rate hike involves more routine maintenance than true upgrades.

[NC Senators call for federal audit of DEQ](#) (Wilmington Star-News analysis) -- Sens. Michael Lee, Bill Rabon among those calling for EPA to review state's regulatory capabilities

[Questions raised about UNCW's GenX tests](#) (Wilmington Star-News analysis) -- Levels of toxic chemical reported don't jibe with other data

[NC's small farms face host of challenges scale](#) (Wilmington Star-News analysis) -- They range from limited financial options to economies of

[Of course drilling's bad for Fla. -- and it's bad for N.C., too](#) (Wilmington Star-News) -- Why should it be open season on North Carolina's coast for oil and gas drilling, while Florida is off-limits? Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke wants to open most of the continental shelf to exploration, including seismic testing. The big exception, it seems, is Florida. (One lower-level official later said the Sunshine State might be "back on the table," but in the Trump Administration, nothing is certain until the Big Guy Tweets.)

[JON HAWLEY: Navy study of wind farm effect ongoing](#) (Elizabeth City Daily Advance analysis) -- About a year ago, state lawmakers called for shutting down the Amazon Wind Farm US East over concerns it would cause too much interference with a vital, U.S. Navy long-range radar receiver in Chesapeake.

[Duke Energy coal ash lawsuit dismissed after agreement reached with](#)

Energy's coal ash ponds has been dismissed after an agreement was reached with families involved.

## **HEALTH**

[ADAM OWENS: Chapel Hill family, community remembers beloved educator who died from flu](#)(WRAL-TV analysis) -- Ginny Thompson's story brings focus to how seriously dangerous the flu can be.

[Audit: North Carolina health care system overbilled Medicare](#) (AP news analysis) -- A federal audit has revealed that a North Carolina-based health care system overbilled Medicare by an estimated \$1.7 million for patients treated at two hospitals.

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